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Part I: General Information

Washington State Child and Family Services Review Program Improvement Plan	
I. PIP General Information	
ACF Region: I <input type="checkbox"/> II <input type="checkbox"/> III <input type="checkbox"/> IV <input type="checkbox"/> V <input type="checkbox"/> VI <input type="checkbox"/> VII <input type="checkbox"/> VIII <input type="checkbox"/> IX <input type="checkbox"/> X <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
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State PIP Team Members * (name, title, organization)	
Refer to Attachment A for a full list of Program Improvement Planning Workgroup Members	

Part II: Introduction

A. The State of Washington

Washington is divided into two geographically distinct areas by the Cascade Mountain range. West of the mountains, the Interstate 5 corridor is characterized by relatively prosperous urban areas ranging from Everett in the north to Vancouver on the Washington-Oregon border. The remainder of the western part of the state consists of rural areas and smaller communities traditionally dependent on logging and fishing. East of the mountains, agriculture is the largest industry and, though there are several urban centers, the area is mostly rural in character.

Washington is a state of six million people, 1.5 million of whom are under the age of 18. There are 29 federally recognized Tribes in Washington and a total Native American population of approximately 150,000. There are well-established African-American and Asian-American communities throughout the state. There is also a fast-growing Hispanic/Latino population which was originally concentrated in the agriculture and food processing industries of Eastern Washington, but is now expanding into both urban and rural areas all over the state. In addition, Washington is the new home to an ever-changing array of immigrants from Russia and other nations of the former Soviet Union, from both East and West Africa, and from Asia and the Pacific.

As of 2000, 10.6 percent of Washington's population had incomes below the federal poverty level, but the number has likely risen since then because of the current economic downturn. Washington currently has the second highest unemployment rate in the nation and economists predict that recovery will come more slowly here than in the rest of the country. In the past two decades, Washington's economy has become more sharply divided between the prosperity created by the software, biotech, and other new (and mostly urban) industries, and the poverty and unemployment created by declines in logging and fishing and increased global competition and automation in agriculture.

High unemployment and growth in the number of low-wage jobs with no benefits are creating both more demand for health and human services and less revenue with which to provide them. Like other states, Washington's legislature has been forced to cut the state's general fund budget and reduce the level of state funding for health and human services.

Washington's Human Services System

In the early 1970s, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) was created as an umbrella agency to bring together state human service programs, so that people could receive comprehensive assistance. Although progress has been made, the goal

of integrating services has been elusive because of funding and regulatory barriers and trends toward increasing specialization of services. Today, integration of services - both within DSHS and with community partners - has re-emerged as a top priority. Service integration and alignment with community resources is now seen as a way to provide better client outcomes and to reduce costs by focusing on earlier, more comprehensive interventions that help individuals and families solve problems more quickly.

The Children's Administration (CA) is one of six administrations providing client services within DSHS. Other administrations include: Medical Assistance, Juvenile Rehabilitation, Economic Services, Health and Rehabilitative Services (which includes mental health, drug and alcohol treatment, vocational rehabilitation, and post-release mental health services for sex offenders), and Aging and Disability Services.

Most human services are provided by these DSHS agencies. However, counties and consortia of counties operate state-funded HMO-like organizations that provide mental health services and counties fund and provide most outpatient drug and alcohol treatment.

The Children's Administration

The Children's Administration is organized into six geographic regions, with 44 local field offices to provide services to children and families in their own communities.

The headquarters office in Olympia will be reorganized in July 2004 to better align the goals of CA with the organizational structure. CA headquarters is currently organized into four divisions and the Deputy Assistant Secretary Section:

- The Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS) Section oversees quality assurance, continuous quality improvement, staff training and accreditation efforts.
- The Division of Licensed Resources (DLR) recruits, licenses, and monitors foster homes and other out-of-home care for children. The DLR Child Abuse/Neglect Section investigates allegations of abuse and neglect in licensed out-of-home care.
- The Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) includes Child Protective Services, which investigates allegations of abuse and neglect in unlicensed care settings, Family Reconciliation Services and Child Welfare Services.
- The Division of Program and Policy Development provides leadership and coordination of policy, legislative relations and regulation.
- The Management Services Division provides data, research, human resources, federal funding oversight and fiscal support.

Regional Administrators oversee the provision of services in CA's 44 local and six regional offices. Field services are delivered through two divisions, the Division of Licensed Resources and the Division of Children and Family Services, which includes Child Protective Services (CPS), Child Welfare Services (CWS) Family Reconciliation Services (FRS), and the Alternative Response System (ARS).

The Children's Administration has approximately 2,700 employees, with a total 2003-2005 biennial budget of nearly \$900 million, of which 50 percent comes from the state's general fund.

In the last year, CA provided the following services:

- Responded to a total of 94,800 requests for services;
- Responded to 77,200 referrals of abuse and neglect, and 17,500 referrals for voluntary services;
- Accepted for investigation or referral to alternative services 37,300 referrals concerning 45,500 children;
- Supervised care of 18,000 children in out-of-home care;
- Made 7,100 new placements in out-of-home care and supervised over 7,000 exits from out-of-home care, including:
 - ✓ 4,909 reunifications with parents,
 - ✓ 1,204 adoptions, and
 - ✓ 593 guardianships.

The Child and Family Services Review

The Children's Administration is making full use of the opportunity afforded by the Child and Family Services Review to assess agency strengths and challenges and to plan for the future. The CFSR is seen as an important developmental opportunity for the agency. Efforts will continue in the future to integrate the CFSR into CA's regular quality improvement activities and strategic planning process. An extensive, well-designed process with ample involvement of staff, providers, communities, families, foster parents and Tribes has been undertaken to identify and analyze issues in great detail. Special consultations with Tribes and Tribal organizations, focus groups with foster parents, development and analysis of new data, and meetings with providers and other partners have ensured a thorough examination of policy and practice at every level of the organization.

Part III: Summary of Findings from the Child and Family Services Review

SAFETY

Washington State did not achieve substantial conformity in the two Safety outcome areas in the CFSR.

With regard to Safety Outcome 1 (Children are first and foremost protected from abuse and neglect) the review found that while the majority of maltreatment reports were responded to in a timely manner, in some cases there was a delay in responding. The review also found that Washington State did not meet the federal standard regarding repeat maltreatment. The federal standard requires that no more than 6.1 percent of founded maltreatment cases have another founded referral of maltreatment within six months. The rate for Washington State was 10.8 percent. In relation to Safety outcome 2 (Children are maintained safely in their own homes) the review concluded that in some cases safety assessments and/or services were not sufficiently comprehensive to address risk of harm.

The lack of statewide consistency in practice was the major theme of the safety review findings. A lack of consistency was noted in regard to in responding to reports of maltreatment within agency established time frames, in completing quality safety assessments and safety plans, and in following through with the plans.

PERMANENCY

The Child and Family Service Review (CSFR) determined that Washington State did not achieve substantial compliance in the two PERMANENCY outcome areas in the CFSR. In Permanency 1 (Children have permanency and stability in their living situations) Washington State did not quite meet the federal standard related to placement stability. The federal standard requires that 86.7 percent or more children experience no more than two placements within 12 months. The rate for Washington State was 83.7 percent. Also the Washington State rate for re-entry into foster care (14.8 percent) did not meet the federal standard (8.6) However, Washington State did meet the federal standard for re-unification of children with their families with 81.6 percent of children being re-unified within 12 months of placement compared to the federal standard of 76.2 percent.

Washington State was not in substantial conformity with the federal requirements related to Permanency 2 (The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children). This permanency outcome focused on the practice of keeping families connected. This included out of home placements in proximity to family, placement with siblings, placement with relatives, and preserving connections by providing regular visitation between parents and children to maintain and improve

the parent/child bond, sibling visitation, and maintaining a child's heritage and their established ties to the community, school, and church activities.

The CFSR found consistency in efforts to place children in close proximity to their families and to place siblings together in foster care. However, areas of concern included a lack of consistent effort to promote frequent visitation between children and their parents and siblings in foster care, to seek and assess relatives as placement resources, to preserve children's connections to their families and heritage, and to support or promote the parent/child relationship.

WELL-BEING

Washington State did not achieve substantial compliance in the three WELL-BEING outcome areas in the CFSR. Well-Being 1 (Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs) focuses on efforts to ensure that the service needs of children, parents, and foster parents are assessed and the necessary services are provided to meet the identified needs.

The key themes emerging from the review related to Well-Being 1 were the lack of consistency of practice regarding assessment of needs, the need for greater involvement of parents and children in the case planning process, the lack of involvement of fathers, and the need for greater face-to-face contact between social workers and the parents and children on their caseloads.

Well-Being 2 (Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs) focused on efforts to address the educational needs of children in out of home placements and in their own home. While substantial compliance was not obtained in the area of meeting the educational needs of the child, the overall compliance rate was fairly close to meeting the goal. In the area of meeting the educational needs of children, 95 percent of the cases were rated as strength for children in out-of-home care but only 50 percent for children in their own home. Increasing the educational services to children in their own home has raised the issue of the agency's right to intercede in voluntary service cases, other than offering advocacy and referral

The third outcome measure Well-Being 3 (Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs) area of focus incorporated assessments of the child welfare agency's efforts to meet the children's physical health and mental health needs. Washington State did not achieve substantial conformity with federal requirements in this area.

Although it was noted that the physical health needs of children in foster care were most often being met, there was some inconsistency in practice and issues related to accessing dental and orthodontic care. With respect to mental health the review identified delays in the provision of mental health services for children and the scarcity of mental health services for children across the State. In addition, the review determined that in some of the in-home services cases, a mental health

assessment and/or mental health services were warranted but there was inconsistency in practice in responding to these needs.

SYSTEMIC FACTORS

Washington State was given a strength rating in the area of operating a **Statewide Information System** that can readily identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for children in foster care. However, issues were raised regarding the cumbersome and complex nature of the legal and placement module in the information system and the fact that the Individualized Service and Safety Plan (ISSP) is not yet fully automated.

Washington State was rated not in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of **Case Review System**. The case review requirements include: written case plans developed jointly with the child and parents; court review of each child's dependency status every six months and timely annual permanency hearings; timely termination of parental rights; notification to foster parents of their right to participate in review hearings. The review concluded that Washington State had a strong system for Court review of the status of children, and that this system met federal requirements. However, the review found that caregivers are not consistently informed of these hearings and of their right to attend and be given an opportunity to be heard. The lack of consistent involvement of parents and children (particularly fathers) in the development of case plans was a continuing theme. A final identified concern was the delay, in some cases, in filing for termination of parental rights in accordance with the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA). The lack of legal representation, continuances, and available court time were identified as factors contributing to these delays.

Washington State received a strength rating for their **Quality Assurance System** which ensures that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect the safety and health of the children. This system also focuses on outcomes and uses data and case reviews to improve safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for children.

Staff and Provider Training was not rated as being in substantial conformity with federal requirements due to the finding that ongoing training, while available, was not required for staff or foster parents. However, initial training for staff and foster parents, and the extensive availability of ongoing training was noted as a strength.

The systemic factor of **Service Array** was rated not in substantial conformity with federal requirements as the review concluded the State has critical gaps in its service array in the areas of mental health services and substance abuse treatment, and has an insufficient pool of foster homes. Available services were not consistently accessible statewide and are not consistently individualized to meet cultural, language, and service needs of families and children.

Washington State was found to be in substantial conformity with federal requirements in the area of **Agency Responsiveness to the Community** because the State engages in ongoing consultation and collaboration. The review also found that child welfare services are coordinated with services or benefits of other federal or federally assisted programs serving the same population. The report noted a need to improve the process of consolidation and government to government relations with Tribes.

Washington State is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor pertaining to **Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment and Retention** because comprehensive standards for licensing foster family homes and child care institutions have been implemented. These standards are applied to all licensed or approved foster family homes or child care institutions receiving title IV-E or IV-B funds. Criminal background checks are also consistently completed for prospective foster and adoptive parents. Recruitment and retention efforts in order to provide an adequate stable, pool of foster and adoptive homes that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of the children in care was identified as an area needing improvement.